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Committees
Economic Development, Small
Business and Regulatory Reform VC
Families and Human Services VC
Government Operations
Health Policy

The Jacobs Report

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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GOVERNMENT-MANDATED COUNSELING BILLS PASS SENATE

Under legislation passed by the Senate this week, couples planning on getting married would be required to participate in pre-marital counseling or wait nearly a month for their marriage license to be valid. Included in the same package is legislation requiring divorcing couples with children to undergo classes before receiving governmental approval to divorce.

The controversial package spurred one of the angriest Senate floor debates in years.

The Republican Appropriations Chair, Senator Shirley Johnson (R-Troy), unleashed scathing comments against her party colleagues. "I joined the Republican Party in 1960," she said. "I did so because it fought so hard and believed so strongly in the right of the individual—an individual's decisions and the individual's right to make his or her own choices—and I believe that to this day. The last thing in the world I want, or should anybody in this chamber or in this state or in this country want, is more and more government intrusion. And yet day after day after day, it is my own party that comes up with one study that says government should intrude for the better of us all. For the better of who? I can't help but be offended."

"This is the most offensive piece of legislation in my entire years here," she added. "If you think this is what government is all about, you are all wrong."

Sen. Johnson also respectfully requested, "That those individuals in this body who have experienced divorce, who have cost this state these dollars that we are talking about over the years, you should out of respect for the citizens of this state and your constituency abstain from voting."

Senator Gilda Z. Jacobs (D-Huntington Woods) also voiced strong opposition. "If these bills pass into law, we're requiring people to pay for counseling," she said. "And if you can't afford these counseling sessions, then you will be penalized. I would submit to this body that poverty is a greater barrier to marriages. There are probably more failed marriages because people simply can't afford to take care of their families. I think that we should be, as a body, addressing those issues as opposed to intruding into the personal lives and bedrooms of our Michigan residents."

"This is one of the most important issues we may be discussing," said Sen. Alan Cropsey (R-DeWitt), adding that he believes that government has a rightful role in people's marriages.

Senator Alan Sanborn (R-Richmond) said that he felt that the package would do "real good for society." Anything

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the government can do to strengthen marriage it should do, he said.

“This is an unnecessary intrusion into personal lives,” said Senator Ray Basham (D-Taylor). “What will the state tell me to do next? Tell me what birthday gift I give my wife? How about telling couples how many children they can have? This intrusion, while well intentioned, is ill-conceived.”

It is unlikely the package will become law if it is true that Governor Jennifer Granholm feels the main provisions are too intrusive into private life.

Granholm spokesperson Mary Dettloff said that the governor would support some minor aspects of the package, such as allowing some retired clergy to provide counseling and ending a requirement that the county prosecutor have a presence in all divorces, but that the main bulk of the proposal “goes beyond what state government should be about.”

The 13-bill package, which includes both House- and Senate-originated bills, now goes to the House for approval of Senate changes.

GRANHOLM & VAGNOZZI UNVEIL PRESCRIPTION DISCOUNT CARD

This week at a Farmington Hills Kroger store, Governor Jennifer Granholm and state Representative Aldo Vagnozzi (D-Farmington Hills) unveiled the Michigan prescription drug discount card program that will lower prescription drug costs for some of the state’s one million uninsured residents.

The card is available to low income, working residents who do not have prescription drug coverage and are not enrolled in other government-sponsored prescription drug programs.

“The Michigan prescription drug discount card will provide much needed assistance for the low income working men, women and families who struggle with the high cost of prescription drugs,” Granholm said. “With more than one million uninsured residents in Michigan, this card fills a critical gap in our health care system by making prescription drugs more affordable for those who have nowhere else to turn.”

Enrollees in the program will be able to use their discount prescription drug card at more than 2,300 pharmacies across the state, including all major chain stores.

The MI-Rx program is scheduled to officially begin October 1. The state of Michigan is currently registering individuals for the drug discount card program.

Michigan’s program differs from other state discount programs, such as those offered in Ohio and Arizona, by serving more than just the senior population. There is no age limit to participate in Michigan’s program.

To qualify for the program, family members must only be Michigan residents, have no other prescription drug coverage, and have an income level at or below the state’s median income level.

For a single individual, the median income level is \$27,930. For a family of four that income level is \$56,550.

“Governor Granholm has made a commitment to provide low cost prescription drugs to improve the health care for all Michigan residents,” said Janet Olszewski, director of the Michigan Department of Community Health. “This free drug discount program will be crucial as Michigan looks to close the gap among our uninsured populations.”

When enrollees present a MI-Rx card at a participating pharmacy they can expect to save approximately 20 percent off the retail price of common prescription drugs. Savings will depend on the kinds of medicines used, and if they are generic or brand name drugs.

“Residents should still shop around for the best prices,” said Senator Gilda Jacobs. “Drug prices vary, even within pharmacy chains.”

Currently, more than one million Michigan citizens do not have access to prescription drug coverage.

Enrollment for the card began Tuesday. Applications can be obtained from the Department of Community Health website: www.michigan.gov/mdch, or by calling the MIRx toll-free hotline at 1-866-755-6479.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Office Hours:

FERNDALE

Monday, October 4
10:30 AM – 11:30 AM
Kulick Center, Ferndale
1201 Livernois
Meeting Room #2

OAK PARK

Monday, October 11
11:30 AM – 12:30 PM
Oak Park Community Center
Computer Room

HAZEL PARK

Tuesday, October 19
2:00 PM – 3:00 PM
Hazel Park Community Center

GERONTOLOGY PANEL DISCUSSION

Monday, October 4, 12:30 - 3:00 PM
McDonnell Tower Dining Room
24300 Civic Center Drive - Southfield

All Michigan legislation can be tracked at <http://www.legislature.michigan.gov/> .

State Senator Gilda Jacobs represents the 14th Senate District, which includes Beverly Hills, Bingham Farms, Farmington, Farmington Hills, Ferndale, Franklin, Hazel Park, Huntington Woods, Lathrup Village, Oak Park, Pleasant Ridge, Royal Oak Township, Southfield, and Southfield Township. She is the Minority Vice Chair of the Families & Human Services Committee and the Economic Development, Small Business & Regulatory Reform Committee. She also serves on the Government Operations and Health Policy Committees.

Constituents of the 14th District may contact Senator Jacobs at sengjacobs@senate.michigan.gov or toll-free at 1-888-937-4453.

This newsletter is produced in single-space form in order to save paper and transmission costs.

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